

REMARKS

This paper is filed in response to the Office Action mailed May 21, 2003 in which claims 1-37 were pending in the above-referenced application. Claims 8, 9, 14, 17, 28, and 37 were withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1-19, 22-24, and 26-28 were rejected. Claims 29-36 were allowed and claims 20, 21, and 25 were objected to as dependent upon a rejected base claim. By this paper, claims 1, 18, 22, 23, 29, 31, and 32 have been amended. The amendment of claim 1 is inherently supported by several of the accompanying figures, and particularly by FIGS. 3B, 4D, 5A, 12B and 12G.

Applicant extends appreciation to the Examiner for the telephonic interview conducted with Applicant's undersigned attorney on September 3, 2003.

Claim Objections

Claim 23 was objected to because of informalities resulting from a typographical error (Applicant notes that the Office Action indicates the objection as applicable to claim 22, but the substance of the rejection and further discussion with respect thereto clearly indicate that it is directed towards claim 23). Applicant has herein amended claim 23 to remedy the error noted by the Examiner. Furthermore, Applicant has amended claim 32 to correct a similar error and has amended claims 22 and 31 to correct other typographical errors. As corrections to obvious typographical errors, none of the claim amendments presented herein narrow the scope of the claims and therefore Applicant in presenting the amendments has ***not*** surrendered equivalents for any of the pending claims.

Claim Rejections

Claims 1-19, 22-24, and 26-28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,774,615 issued to Lim et al. (hereinafter "Lim"). Applicant respectfully submits that Lim does not teach, disclose, or suggest all of the claim elements of any of the claims listed above.

For example, the embodiments of Lim referenced by the Examiner in FIGS. 3 and 4 do not teach, disclose, or suggest providing a holding means that is "configured such that the force holding the first vessel portion is unevenly distributed over the first vessel portion." Accordingly, Lim does not anticipate independent claim 1. For at least the same reasons, none of the claims depending therefrom are anticipated by Lim.

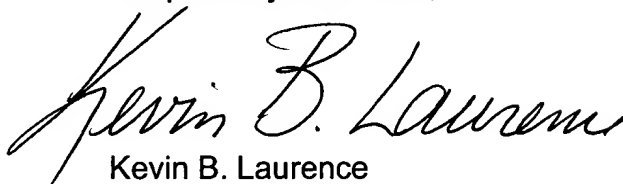
Furthermore, with respect to independent claim 18, Lim does not teach, disclose, or suggest providing a compression plate opening "defined by a plurality of holding tabs extending from a ring of [the] compression plate," nor does Lim teach, disclose, or suggest providing holding tabs that "are adapted to hold the first vessel portion" in any manner. The structures indicated to be holding tabs by the Examiner, referenced at 6 in figure 4 of Lim, do not define a compression plate opening, nor are they adapted to hold a vessel portion. Instead, thread 6 of Lim is used as a means to fasten the two connecting structures together. By contrast, the holding tabs of Applicant's invention define an opening in a compression plate and are adapted to hold a vessel portion in an at least partially everted configuration, as can be seen in the accompanying figures. Accordingly, Lim does not anticipate independent claim 18. For at least the same reasons, none of the claims depending therefrom are anticipated by Lim.

It is believed that the claims are patentable in their present form, and a prompt

notice of allowance for this case is respectfully requested. If the Examiner finds any remaining impediment to the prompt allowance of this application, please contact the undersigned attorney.

DATED this 19TH day of SEPTEMBER 2003.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin B. Laurence". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "K" and "L".

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